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HOUSE RESOLUTION 104
By Rinks

A RESOLUTION To honor and congratulate Hamilton County Schools on having their multifaceted approach to school safety selected as an "Exemplary School Safety Project" in the large county category.

WHEREAS, It is most fitting that the elected representatives of the State of Tennessee should pause to pay tribute to those outstanding programs that have contributed significantly to the reduction of disruptive behavior, violence, drug use, suspensions, and drop-out rates in our public school systems; and

WHEREAS, The Hamilton County School System's Safe Schools Initiative is most assuredly one such worthy program, as it has been selected as an "Exemplary School Safety Project" pursuant to the Safe Schools Act of 1998 in the category of large county school systems; and

WHEREAS, On May 7, 1998, the Safe Schools Act of 1998 was signed into law to provide grants for local education programs to develop innovative violence prevention programs, conflict resolution, disruptive or assaultive behavior management, improved school security, peer mediation, and training for employees on the identification of possible perpetrators of school-related violence; and

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WHEREAS, Directed by Mr. John Norris, The Hamilton County Safe Schools Initiative's goal is to create an attitude of safety and inclusion at the student level and to charge each student with the social responsibility of making campuses safe; and

WHEREAS, The Hamilton County Schools have taken a multi-directional approach to school safety, with a dual focus on prevention and response; the prevention aspect includes both programs and equipment used to identify potential problems before they erupt; these programs and equipment are funded or purchased through a combination of State, local, and private funding; and

WHEREAS, Hamilton County Schools has partnered with the local municipalities to place a School Resource Officer in each middle and high school within the school system, totaling thirty officers assigned to the school system. Equipment for these officers, including computers for logging and tracking SRO activities, metal detectors, breathalyzers, and wireless communication "walkie talkies" for each school, was provided by the school system through the Safe Schools Grant moneys; and

WHEREAS, Another component of the Safe Schools Initiative for Hamilton County's schools was funding and training for Character Education and the STARS (Students Taking A Right Stand) program. Through additional funding, STARS was also able to expand its elementary 4th and 5th grade *Life Skills* curriculum to all forty-eight elementary schools; it has also provided a Youth Conference to address adolescent issues and risky behaviors, with 500 students in grades 6-12 in attendance. It has been reported that fifty-five percent of students trained as STARS Peer Mediators reported influencing other students to resolve their conflicts non-violently through the mediation process or casual interventions, as measured by an end-of-year survey; and

WHEREAS, With a well-trained, student-led leadership team in each school, the students of each Hamilton County school wrote a Declaration from On-Campus Violence and

Safety Bill of Rights, each based upon the United States Constitution and Declaration of Independence respectively; and

WHEREAS, Another aspect included in this award-winning initiative was the multi-agency, community-wide activity of planning a response in case a security emergency developed; a school safety response plan was jointly developed with the schools, emergency management, and law enforcement, which has been used as a model for the State by the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency; and

WHEREAS, An extensive safety drill was held as well, with over 120 students role-playing injuries from a bomb explosion. The safety drill was the most extensive ever attempted and required four months of planning, with over twenty public service agencies, 150 responders, seven hospitals, over 1,000 students and faculty, and 56 SWAT team members involved in the drill; and

WHEREAS, Those schools participating in Hamilton County Schools' Safe Schools Initiative include Chattanooga Central High, Red Bank Middle, Red Bank High, East Ridge High, Brainerd High, Sequoyah Technology Center, Harrison Bay Technology Center, Soddy-Daisy Middle and Soddy-Daisy High, with each school's constitution addressing the need for treating students equally and with respect; and

WHEREAS, Hamilton County's Superintendent of Schools, Jesse Register, the Assistant Superintendent, Fred Carr, the Director of the Safe Schools Initiative, and the entire Hamilton County School System, are justifiably proud of the great strides in school safety made by the judicious use of state funds allocated to them; their well-conceived and multi-faceted project has not only deterred violence and crime within our schools, but has also won them this outstanding recognition as an "Exemplary School Safety Project"; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That this legislative body hereby honors and congratulates the outstanding administration, professional

staff, and students of the Hamilton County School System on having their Safe Schools Initiative selected as an "Exemplary School Safety Project" pursuant to the Safe Schools Act of 1998 in the category of large county school systems, and wish these fine people all the best as they implement the worthy goals of this laudable project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.